DOCTOR STRANGE
12¢ IND.
178 MAR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
DR. STRANGE
TM
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
GUEST-STARRING:
BLACK KNIGHT

THE MULTI-TALENTED TEAM OF...
STAN LEE EDITOR
ROY THOMAS WRITER
GENE COLAN ARTIST
TOM PALMER INKER
HERB COOPER LETTERER
...COMBINE FORCES TO CHRONICLE A TALE OF DR. STRANGE, AS HE BATTLES DEMON AND DISASTER--
...WITH
ONE
BESIDE
HIM
Featuring:
THE BATTLING BLADE OF THE
BLACK KNIGHT!

FEW MORTALS SUSPECT THE EXISTENCE OF A CERTAIN HIDDEN RETREAT, HIGH IN THE MIST-SHROUDED HIMALAYAS...AND FEWER STILL COULD VISUALIZE THE SCENE WHICH IS NOW TRANSPIRING THEREIN...
IT'S ALMOST TOO MUCH TO BELIEVE!
DR. BENTON ...ONCE THE RESPECTED COLLEAGUE OF STEPHEN STRANGE...
...UNMASKED AS THE LEADER OF THE GREED-CRAZED SONS OF SATANNISH!
BEYOND RECKONING ARE THE FOLLIES AND FOIBLES OF HUMANKIND, MY SON...
AND, MOST PERPLEXING OF ALL IS THEIR ETERNAL LUSTING AFTER POWER UNRESTRAINED!
--OF EVIL ASMODEUS, WHO HAD ASSUMED MY VERY FACE AND FORM--
--AND OF MYSELF, TRANSFORMED BY AN OCCULT SPELL--
PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE THE BATTLE TOOK PLACE MERE MINUTES AGO...
BUT, STILL ITS VISION HAUNTS ME...
MOCKS ME WITH THE IMAGE OF TWO MYSTIC MASTERS--
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"--INTO ONE WHOSE VISAGE WAS BOTH MORE AND LESS THAN MERELY HUMAN...!"
ASMODEUS MUST HAVE STOLEN HIS PRESENT POWER FROM THOSE WHO WERE HIS ALLIES!
YET, HE'LL NOT FIND DR. STRANGE SO SIMPLE A VICTIM!
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
IS THERE NOTHING THAT WILL CURB YOUR ATTACK, STRANGE?
NOTHING ...SAVE YOUR TOTAL SURRENDER!
YIELD, PRETENDER!
DO NOT FORCE ME TO USE MY FULL MYSTIC MIGHT TO DEFEAT YOU!
YIELD?
NEVER!!
RATHER, I'LL UNLEASH ALL MY OWN MATCHLESS POWER-- AGAINST YOU!
HE'S PERSPIRING... BREATHING HEAVILY!
HIS HEART WON'T STAND SUCH UNBEARABLE STRAIN MUCH LONGER...!
STOP-- BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

"BUT, THE FATAL INSTANT HAD ALREADY PASSED--!"
MY HEART!!
SHOULD HAVE KNOWN--IT COULD NEVER SURVIVE--TOTAL MYSTIC COMBAT!
CAN'T BREATHE --CAN'T BREATHE--!
HERE, ASMODEUS... LET ME HELP YOU!
K-KEEP BACK, YOU INFERNAL MEDDLER!
WAIT! SOMETHING'S... HAPPENING TO ME....!
I'M CHANGING --CHANGING BACK TO THE ONE CALLED ASMODEUS!
THAT MEANS... THE MOMENT OF DEATH DRAWS NEAR!
YET, IF I MUST DIE-- ONE VICTORY AT LEAST SHALL STILL BE MINE...!
ONLY I CAN SENSE THE TRUE MEANING OF THE EVIL ONE'S CRYPTIC WORDS!
BUT, I HAVE FORESWORN INTERFERENCE... I CAN DO NOTHING!
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THE BOOK! THE BOOK OF THE VISHANTI!
MUST REACH IT-- MUST GIVE UTTERANCE TO THE WORDS--
THERMIDORUS ...FRIGIBUS... NIHILIUS!!
"...AND, THOSE WORDS SPOKEN, MY DEFEATED FOE COLLAPSED... ON THE VERGE OF DEATH..."
"THEN..."
ASMODEUS WAS --DR. BENTON--
--HE WHO WAS ONCE MY MEDICAL COLLEAGUE!
...THUS PERISHED ASMODEUS!
HE DIED AS HE LIVED...A VEXING ENIGMA!
WAS HE SOMEHOW RESPONSIBLE, IN YEARS PAST, FOR MY FATEFUL INJURY--
--THE ACCIDENT WHICH COST YOU THE USE OF YOUR SKILLED HANDS?
'TIS A MYSTERY WE HAVE NO TIME FOR PONDERING, MY SON...
...NOT WHILE THE GREATEST MENACE OF ALL LOOMS BEFORE US!
YOU MEAN...THE SINISTER SPELL GASPED OUT BY THE DYING BENTON!
WELL DO I KNOW THAT, ONE HOUR FROM ITS UTTERANCE, TWO AWESOME CREATURES WILL BE UNLEASHED UPON THE EARTH--

"THE DREADED MONSTERS KNOWN IN WHISPERED LEGENDS AS SURTUR, THE FIRE DEMON... AND YMIR, THE LAST FROST GIANT!"
"BUT, NO MAN KNOWS THE WAY TO REVERSE A SPELL SPOKEN BY ONE WHO RECEIVED HIS POWERS FROM SATANNISH THE SUPREME HIMSELF..."
"...UNLESS IT BE THOSE OTHER LUCKLESS MORTALS WHO ONCE CALLED THEMSELVES HIS ADOPTED SONS--"
"--AND WHO WERE BANISHED BY THEIR OWN LEADER TO THE DISMAL DIMENSION OF TYRANNICAL TIBORO...!"*
THIS MUCH HAS MY OWN CONJURING TOLD ME!
BUT, EVEN I DARE NOT RE-ENTER TIBORO'S SPHERE--
--UNLESS ANOTHER MYSTIC REMAINS BEHIND--TO AID MY RETURN!
*FIRST AND LAST ENCOUNTERED IN STRANGE TALES #129.--STAN.
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BUT YOU, REVERED ONE, ARE OLD... AND CLEA IS WEAKENED BY HER SOJOURN ON EARTH!
THEN, THERE IS ONLY ONE TO WHOM I CAN TURN!
WITH A MAGICAL PASS, I'LL RESUME THE ENCHANTED FORM IN WHICH I FOUGHT ASMODEUS--
FOR, THAT BATTLE TAUGHT ME HOW DANGEROUS IT IS FOR OTHER HUMANS TO KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE MYSTIC WHO WALKS AMONG MEN!
'TIS DONE!
AND NOW, I'LL SEND MY ASTRAL BODY ABROAD TO SEEK OUT--
--THE LOVELY BRITISHER KNOWN AS VICTORIA BENTLEY!

TIME AND SPACE ARE AS NOTHING TO MY ETHEREAL FORM!
ALREADY, I BEHOLD HER ENGLISH CASTLE, AND--
I'LL DRAW NEARER--INVISIBLE, INTANGIBLE--TO FATHOM THIS NEW MYSTERY!
BY THE VIPERS OF VALTORR! I SEEM TO DETECT --ANOTHER MYSTIC PRESENCE!
THERE STANDS VICTORIA ...HOSTESS TO A MASQUE!
BUT, WHO IS THAT BESIDE HER?
...SO PLEASED YOU'RE MY NEW NEIGHBOR, MR. WHITMAN!
YOUR SWORD! IT GLOWS, THOUGH DARK AS EBONY!
A...MERE EFFECT, MISS BENTLEY!
I'D INVITE YOU TO WIELD IT YOURSELF--
BUT ITS EDGE IS RAZOR-SHARP!
WHY DOES THIS DANE WHITMAN REMIND ME SO...OF ONE I CAN'T FORGET...
...OF STEPHEN STRANGE?
IT WAS A MISTAKE TO ATTEND THIS PARTY IN MY ARMOR!
YET, IT WAS AN IRRESISTIBLE IMPULSE... ONE I YIELDED TO!
I'VE OBSERVED ENOUGH TO BE CERTAIN!
IT'S THAT MAN'S BLADE MY MYSTIC POWERS SENSED!
I BEHELD ONE DRESSED SUCH AS HE ...IN AMERICA, NOT LONG AGO*
HE WAS CALLED...THE BLACK KNIGHT!
*AT THE RECENT WEDDING OF HANK AND JAN IN AVENGERS #60, TO BE PRECISE--BUT THEY WERE NEVER FORMALLY INTRODUCED!--STAN.
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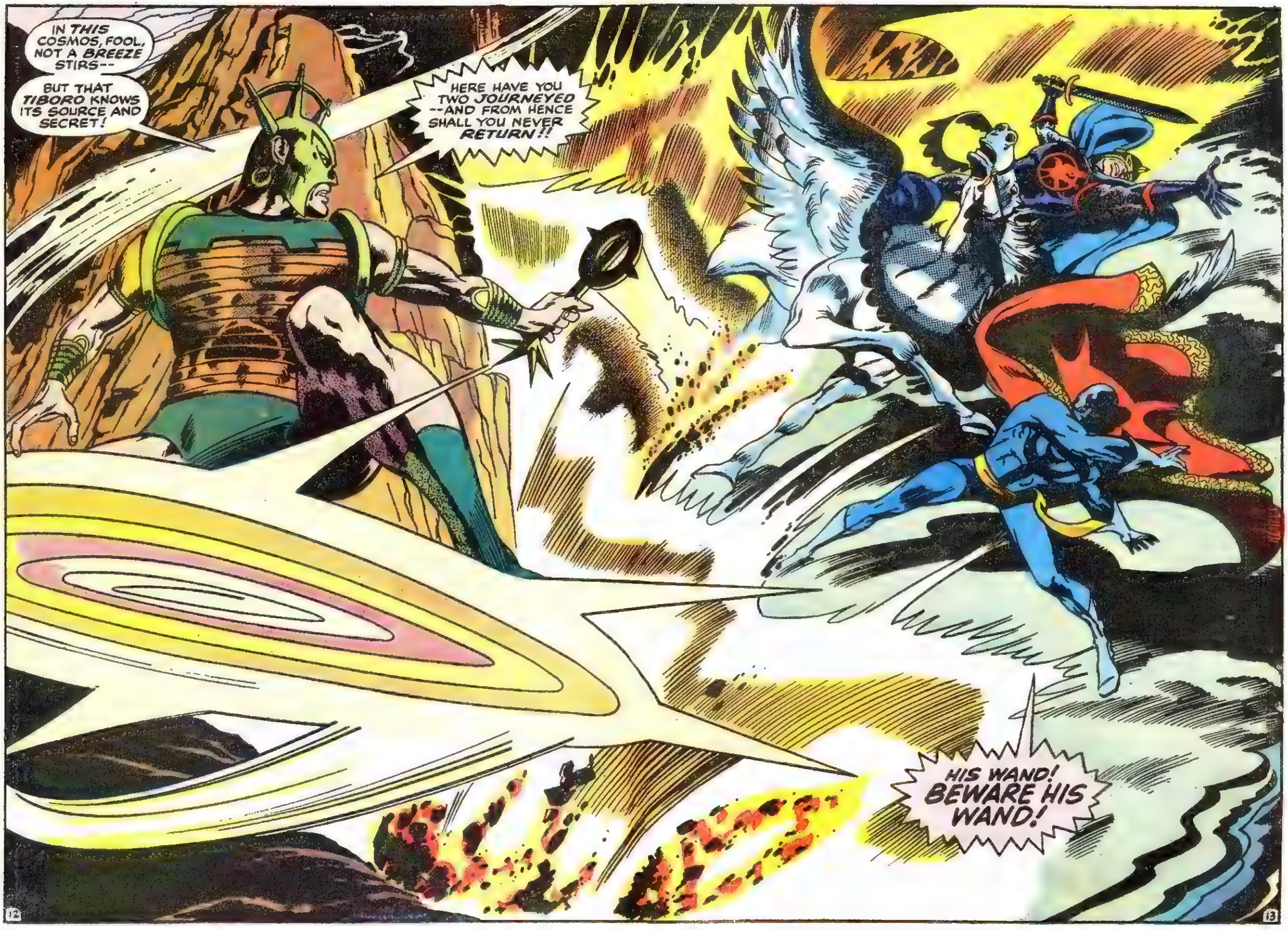
I MUST SPEAK WITH HIM...AND WITH VICTORIA ...ALONE!
BY THE DEMONS OF DARKNESS-- IN THE NAME OF SATANNISH--
BY THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE--
--LET YON REVELERS VANISH!!
MR. WHITMAN-- WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENED?
ALL MY OTHER GUESTS--HAVE DISAPPEARED!
LOOK! SOMEONE BEHIND ME--!
SOMEONE EVEN YOUR OCCULT BLADE CANNOT HARM, MY FRIEND!
SOMEONE WHOM VICTORIA KNOWS AS...DR. STRANGE!
IT IS HIS VOICE!
BUT, THAT FACE--SO HORRID--!
I'VE HEARD OF YOU, STRANGE... THRU MEANS OF MY OWN!
THEN, PERHAPS YOU'LL BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY--
I NEED YOU... AND YOUR SWORD!

MY... SWORD?
IF YOU CAN DETECT ITS POWER, THEN YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW--
YOU CAN DEPEND ON...THE BLACK KNIGHT!
...MOUNT YOUR STEED, MY FRIEND...AND MAKE READY TO DEPART!
AND SO, I HOPE, WILL WE!
I'LL KEEP IN MENTAL CONTACT WITH YOU, STEPHEN!
JUST AS YOU DESIRED!
YOUR VANISHED GUESTS SHALL RETURN SOON, VICTORIA!
THAT WINGED STALLION--APPEARING AT DANE WHITMAN'S COMMAND!
WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS YOUNG AMERICAN?
HOWEVER, WE MUST NOW LEAVE THE YOUNG HEIRESS--WHOSE MYSTIC POWERS ARE NOT YET FULLY AWAKENED--TO HER SPECULATIONS, AS...
WE'RE FADING AWAY--IN A VORTEX OF BLINDING LIGHT!
BUT, TO WHERE--?
I DARED HOPE AS MUCH!
FOR--BY THE MANY MOONS OF MUNNOPOR --TIME GROWS SHORT!
INTO THE SO-CALLED SIXTH DIMENSION, CURIOUS ONE...INTO THE REALM OF THE EVIL TIBORO!
AND, MAY THE OMNIPOTENT OSHTUR PROTECT US ALL IF WE FAIL IN OUR MISSION!

THE WHISPERS... THE HALF-REMEMBERED TALES I HEARD OF SUCH A MAN...WERE TRUE!
A SINGLE GESTURE-- AND WE HURTLE THRU WORLDS WHICH MORTAL EYES HAVE NEVER BEHELD!
YOU'VE... GROWN TANGIBLE, STRANGE!
MY ASTRAL BODY AND PHYSICAL SELF HAVE MERGED!
A SIMPLE ENOUGH SPELL! BUT, TAKE CARE--
WE APPROACH OUR DESTINATION!
YES, LOOK, PUNY ONES ...AND LOOK WELL!
GAZE ON THE INVINCIBLE FORM OF... TIBORO!
AND BEHIND HIM...THOSE WHOM YOU FOOLISHLY SEEK!
WE'RE... HERE!
--WHEREVER THAT IS!
LOOK!!
THE SIXTH DIMENSION, FRIEND KNIGHT! AND--
THE SONS OF SATANNISH!
THEN--YOU KNEW--??


IN THIS COSMOS, FOOL, NOT A BREEZE STIRS--
BUT THAT TIBORO KNOWS ITS SOURCE AND SECRET!
HERE HAVE YOU TWO JOURNEYED --AND FROM HENCE SHALL YOU NEVER RETURN!!
HIS WAND! BEWARE HIS WAND!
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WISE WORDS, MORTAL!
BUT MUCH, MUCH TOO LATE--!!
A WALL OF UNHOLY LIGHT --RISING UP BEFORE US!
THEN STRIKE, SWORD--FOR THE BLACK KNIGHT!
KNIGHT--DON'T SMITE THAT WALL OF BLAZING LIGHT!
TIBORO'S POWERS ARE VAST...BEYOND COMPREHENSION!
THE MERE RECOIL FROM SUCH AN ENCOUNTER MIGHT DESTROY YOU--!
THEN, THERE ARE TWO UNKNOWN FACTORS IN THIS BATTLE, MY FRIEND--
TIBORO'S POWER--
AND THE MYSTIC MIGHT OF MERLIN'S EBONY BLADE!
AND NOW, WE SHALL SOON SEE WHICH SHALL PREVAIL!
BY THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!
HE SHATTERED THE WALL LIKE GLASS --IN ONE BLINDING SWEEP!

SO IT WOULD SEEM!
YET, I SENSE SUCH AN OCCURRENCE STARTLED HIM AS MUCH AS IT DID TIBORO!
THAT IT DID!
EVEN I KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT THE BLACK BLADE!
KNIGHT--DON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON TIBORO!
HE'S STILL A FOE TO BE RECKONED WITH!
YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO THOSE MORE EXPERIENCED IN SUCH MATTERS, ARMORED ONE!
FOR NOW, YOU ARE DOOMED!!
WHERE THE SPELL STRIKES THE GROUND--
--BUT ONLY TO SINK ONCE MORE INTO OBLIVION!
SWISH
DOOMED?
WHEN YOUR BLINDING BOLT MISSED M--
WAIT!
DREAD MONSTERS SPRING TO LIFE--
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SWORD AND MAN STRIKE AS ONE LETHAL, LIVING ENTITY, BUT--
EVEN THE BLACK BLADE HAS ITS LIMITS!
HE SMITES ONE--AND TWO MORE ARISE!
DIE, VERMIN-- DIE!!
YET, THERE ARE OTHER WEAPONS BESIDES THE SABRE!
MAY YON BRUTES WHICH SPRANG FROM FOUNTS UNSEEN--
BY THE ROVING RINGS OF RAGGADORR-- BY THE MYRIAD MOONS OF MUNNOPOR--
--BE ENCASED IN PRISONS CRYSTALLINE!!
YOU-- SOLIDIFIED THE VERY AIR AROUND--THOSE BEASTS!

YOUR POWERS HAVE INCREASED SINCE OUR LAST CLASH, STRANGE!
THEN, SPARE US THE RENEWAL OF THAT BATTLE--
BY RELINQUISHING THE PRISONERS YOU HOLD!
NEVER! I CAN STILL SMASH YOU LIKE ANY OTHER HUMAN--
WITH A SINGLE BOLT FROM MY WONDROUS WAND--
--BEFORE YOU CAN UTTER ANOTHER RHYMED SPELL!
YOU WOULD INDEED KNOW VICTORY IN THIS MOMENT, TIBORO--
--IF DR. STRANGE POSSESSED ONLY ONE TYPE OF MYSTIC WEAPON!
YET, MANY OF HIS SPELLS NEED ONLY A MOMENT'S THOUGHT TO BECOME UNYIELDING REALITY!
--AS DID THE PSYCHIC SHIELD WHICH NOW PROTECTS ME FROM YOUR BOLT!

YOU FORGET, FOOL--YOU ARE IN TIBORO'S ELEMENT NOW!
YOU CAN ONLY GRADUALLY WEAKEN, AS I HURL AT YOU ANOTHER MYSTIC BOLT--
AND ANOTHER--
AND ANOTHER!!
AND YOU FORGET, TIBORO--
THAT DR. STRANGE IS NOT ALONE THIS TIME!
NOT WHILE THE BLACK KNIGHT STANDS BESIDE HIM!
THEN, MY RECOURSE IS OBVIOUS, DOLT!
YOU SHALL NO LONGER STAND BESIDE ANYONE!
THE GROUND--
HE'S BLASTED IT FROM BENEATH MY FEET--!
EVEN--ARAGORN--CAN'T REACH ME--IN TIME!
I'M FALLING--
FALLING INTO A BLACK, BOTTOMLESS ABYSS!!
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HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR HUMAN FRIENDS, SIR KNIGHT--
FRIENDS WHO HAVE POWERS WHICH MAY SAVE YOU?
AND, BY THE DEATHLESS VISHANTI-- SAVE YOU THEY SHALL!
THE MYSTIC'S SPELL STOPPED ME--
AT THE LAST POSSIBLE INSTANT--
--BEFORE I'D HAVE BEEN LOST-- FOREVER!!
AND YET, WE MAY SOON BE LOST TO-GETHER, MY FRIEND!
FOR, THE SANDS OF EARTH'S TIME ARE RUNNING LOWER... EVER LOWER...!
THERE IS ALWAYS A FLEETING MOMENT FOR... GRATITUDE!
NOW, MORE THAN EVER, MY SWORD IS YOURS TO COMMAND!
THEN, LET US CLOSE IN BATTLE WITH TIBORO FOR THE FINAL TIME--
WHEN YOU ARE RAISED FROM OUT THE ABYSS!
HAH! THE MORTAL FOOL DOES NOT REALIZE HOW CLOSE I HOVER ABOVE HIM!
DR. STRANGE-- LOOK OUT!
ABOVE YOU--!!
MY WAND HAS WELL CAST ITS SPELL OF SILENCE ABOUT ME!
AND NOW, I SHALL HURL THE MOST MIND-RENDING BOLT OF ALL!

TOO LATE FOR WORDS!
THEN, LET THIS SINGLE, SEARING ACTION SPEAK FOR ME!
MY WAND!
TIBORO-- FLOATING ABOVE ME!
YET, THE HURTLING BLADE DESTROYED HIS POWER-BESTOWING WAND--
--AND WITH IT ...HIS SOLE CLAIM TO SUPREMACY IN THIS COSMOS!
CANNOT CONTROL-- MY ENERGY-DISCS!
FALLING --FALL-ING--!
I... YIELD, HUMAN!
CAST ME INTO ETERNAL OBLIVION --AS IS YOUR RIGHT!
I DID NOT FIGHT FOR PERSONAL PRIVILEGE, TIBORO--
BUT TO FREE THE IMPRISONED SONS OF SATANNISH...!
THEN TAKE THEM, MORTAL!
BUT, EXPECT NO GRATITUDE WHEN NEXT WE MEET!
...WE WON, STRANGE!
THEN, WHY SO SILENT ...SO GRIM?
WE HAVE WON BUT ONE BATTLE OF A GREAT WAR, MY FRIEND!
THE TRUE TEST IS YET TO COME!
--THE TEST OF... FIRE AND ICE!!
AND, COME IT SHALL, IN THE POWER-PACKED PAGES OF AVENGERS #61--NOW ON SALE! MISS IT NOT, O KEEPER OF THE FAITH--!